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Adding Site to Superfund Would Start Long-Term Study

Beck's Lake

South Bend, Indiana

June 2013

How to comment

The EPA has set a public comment period on adding the Beck's Lake site to the Superfund program. The comment period ends July 23.

Please refer to the website below for information on the Federal Register Notice and how you can comment:
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-05-24/pdf/2013-12326.pdf>

For more information

For questions about the Beck's Lake site, or what happens when a site becomes a Superfund site, contact:

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Mailing List

If you would like to be placed on the mailing list to receive information about the Beck's Lake site, contact Janet Pope (*see above*).

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The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency last month proposed placing the Beck's Lake site on its National Priorities List (NPL), better known as Superfund. A decision is expected by this fall. If the site is added to the NPL, a long-term Superfund investigation will begin to determine whether cleanup work will be necessary and what might be done.

The Beck's Lake site currently consists of LaSalle Park and nearby residential areas where past dumping left the soil contaminated with arsenic. EPA has taken soil samples in previous investigations, but only recently has the investigation expanded outside of LaSalle Park and into nearby residential areas.

What's happening this summer

On June 11 and 12, contractors working for EPA collected samples from the most heavily used areas of the park, such as playground equipment, soccer fields and the banks of Beck's Lake. EPA took samples from surface soil in LaSalle Park to determine whether any temporary restrictions on use of the park are necessary.

Previous testing focused on the residential area and on deeper, non-surface areas. The samples were field-screened for quick results using state-of-the-art X-ray equipment known as XRF. None of these tests showed a need for park restrictions. EPA will share results of more comprehensive laboratory results with the public when the results are available, probably in about two months.

Background

In the early 1980s, documents obtained by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management showed the area near Beck's Lake was used by industry as a dump. IDEM recommended analyzing soil samples.

In 1989, EPA took soil samples from around the lake and inspected the site to find out if it qualified for either a state or federal cleanup program.

Based on the amount of contamination found in these early studies, IDEM evaluated the site in 1996 for inclusion on the NPL. They determined there was no need for further federal action, based on an evaluation that primarily considered the site's potential to affect drinking water. Since the city does not draw municipal water from the area and there was no evidence of drinking wells, IDEM referred the site to the Indiana Brownfields program for investigation and cleanup.

In 2001, the City of South Bend asked IDEM's Brownfield Program to take samples in LaSalle Park and surrounding lots. Workers took about 20 samples, and some showed arsenic at levels slightly higher than normal. IDEM recommended additional tests on the soil and on the fish in Beck's

Lake.

Those tests, done in 2004, found the quality of the lake was poor, but no specific or additional fish advisory was issued. All lakes and streams in Indiana have a Level 2 fish advisory.

IDEM reassessed the site in 2006 and took more than 20 surface soil samples from residential and public properties around the Beck's Lake site. Seven of those samples were found to have arsenic more than three times higher than what would normally be expected. Samples from the park alone did not show contamination levels that would meet Superfund criteria, but EPA and IDEM decided to do additional soil testing at nearby homes.

In 2009, IDEM collected 40 samples in an effort to determine the extent of arsenic contamination outside the park. Additionally, deep soil samples were taken in the park as part of an investigation to determine a potential source.

Results of the 2009 investigation provided enough data for EPA to propose putting the site on the NPL. IDEM referred the site to EPA in 2011, but recommended that

EPA use what is known as the Superfund Alternative Approach – the Agency would try to negotiate a cleanup with an unidentified party that might be responsible for the contamination, but not actually list the site on the NPL. EPA tried to negotiate a cleanup but could not reach an agreement.

As a result, EPA – with IDEM support – has formally proposed adding Beck's Lake to the national list of Superfund sites.

Next steps

Late this summer, EPA expects to share with the community results of the samples taken during June.

For general information about the site and updates you may visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/region5/cleanup/beckslake/index.html>.

National Priority List

Contaminated sites placed on the EPA's National Priorities List are eligible for investigation and cleanup under EPA's Superfund program. Placing a site in the Superfund program allows for additional funding and resources, including enforcement. EPA's enforcement program seeks out those responsible for a hazardous waste site. Those responsible must either clean up the site or reimburse EPA for the cleanup.